



**Testimony to the Public Health Committee  
March 20th, 2013  
By Leslie Simoes, Executive Director**

**Testimony: [H.B6645 \(RAISED\) AN ACT CONCERNING COMPASSIONATE AID IN DYING FOR TERMINALLY ILL PATIENTS.](#)**

The Arc Connecticut is a 60-year old advocacy organization committed to protecting the basic civil basic rights of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and to promoting opportunities for their full inclusion in the life of their communities. We have 18 chapters across Connecticut providing direct support and services. We rose from grass roots advocacy and have hundreds of families and individuals with disabilities in our Arc family.

The Arc Connecticut opposes this and other attempts to make this type of assistance legal. In fact we have a long history of advocacy in this area and we work in coalition with other groups who oppose physician assisted suicide.

The Arc Connecticut and The Arc of The United States believe that physician-assisted suicide must be prohibited for people with intellectual disability (ID) due to the inherent risk of undue influence. As the nation, individual states and various interest groups consider the adoption of physician-assisted suicide policies, it is essential that people with ID have their rights and interests protected. Historical ignorance, prejudice, and discrimination against people with ID continue. Education of policy makers and society at large is critical and The Arc and other groups work year after year to inform the greater community about how we feel about this very disturbing issue.

Major problems that still exist are:

- The documented history of denial of basic rights and medical care, including nutrition and hydration, places the lives of people with ID at extraordinary risk.
- Despite well-intended laws designed to protect people with ID, our constituents can be unduly influenced by authority figures such as doctors, health care workers, social workers, family, guardian/conservators, and friends, resulting in a lack of true informed consent.
- The current system of health services, particularly managed care, provides economic incentives for rationing health care, and can lead to the encouragement of physician-assisted suicide.

- Society often incorrectly perceives that people with ID, by definition, have a poor quality of life.

Public perception on this issue is sometimes confused with specific issues related to advance directives<sup>3</sup> and death with dignity.

We strongly oppose physician-assisted suicide for people with ID and believe it requires strong and absolute vigilance because:

- The death of any person with ID by way of physician-assisted suicide is never acceptable and should not be allowed by law under any circumstances;
- Laws and procedures, however strict, are not sufficient to protect people with ID from being coerced into ending their lives;
- When the person is seriously ill and in pain, the use of appropriate medical or palliative care to reduce and/or eliminate pain and discomfort can and must be provided.

Please contact me if you have questions. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

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